

Malaysia welcomes the WORLD

A **NEW STRAITS TIMES** SPECIAL
**TOURISM
MALAYSIA**


Rolling out the red carpet for tourists



Wee: We want to make Malaysia the place for tourists to visit next year

EYE on Malaysia, Colours of Malaysia, Malaysia International Aerospace Exhibition, KL International Buskers Festival and the Mega Sales.

Then there are going to be two international music festivals – the Rainforest World Music Festival and the Penang World Music Festival.

These are among 50 major events being organised for Visit Malaysia Year 2007 (VMY 2007). Besides them, each state is organising 10 to 12 events.

VMY 2007 will be officially launched on Jan 6 at Dataran Merdeka by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The soft opening will be on New Year's Day.

The efforts are to ensure that Malaysia is the preferred destination for tourists next year. This is the third Visit Malaysia Year and the government is going all out to make the country one of the top draws in the world for tourists.

The Tourism Ministry and Tourism Malaysia officials have put in many hours,

and will continue to do so in order that VMY 2007 will be a huge success.

Ministry secretary-general and VMY 2007 organising chairman Datuk Dr Victor Wee says some of the 50 events would become permanent fixtures on the tourism events calendar if the response from the Malaysian public and tourists is good.

The Eye on Malaysia is a huge ferris wheel similar to the London Eye. This will give a 360-degree panoramic view of Kuala Lumpur to those going on the gondolas.

The 30-minute ride reaches a height of 60 metres and offers views of over 20km of the city from its base at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa.

The popular Colours of Malaysia has a fresh concept and will showcase the best of Malaysian culture, craft and cuisine for one month from May to June.

The other big event to look out for next year is the Malaysia International Aerospace Exhibition at the Subang International Airport. One of the main attractions will be the Russian Space

Shuttle. Malaysia is one of the first few Asian countries to hold this world-class expo.

"There will also be two World Music Festivals in July next year," Wee says.

The first – the Rainforest World Music festival – will be held at the Sarawak Cultural Village.

The other, the Penang World Music Festival, will be staged at the Botanical Gardens in Penang.

"We decided to have two music festivals, both with international appeal, to enable more tourists and Malaysians to enjoy these events."

The KL International Buskers Festival promises to showcase "the best of the best" street performers from at least six countries. They are being invited to Malaysia to thrill and delight audiences.

The whole country will be in a celebratory mood next year with so many events in the pipeline.

VMY promotions in the past have been successful. The first, VMY 1990,

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attracted 7.45 million tourists and earned the country RM4.5 billion. The second VMY in 1994 attracted 7.13 million tourists who spent some RM8.3 billion.

The lowest period for Malaysia, in terms of tourist arrivals, was in 1998 when there were 5.6 million tourist arrivals. The "Malaysia Truly Asia" global campaign was launched the following year to boost arrivals and was a huge success.

Since then, we have never looked back and our tourist arrivals continue to increase at a steady pace bringing in billions of dollars in foreign exchange.

The target set for VMY 2007 is 20.1 million tourist arrivals and RM44.5 billion in tourism receipts.

Tourism is the second biggest revenue earner for Malaysia after manufacturing.

"All this has been achieved through hard work, focus and dedication by both the Tourism Ministry and Tourism Malaysia. They have been aggressively promoting the country all over the world.

"The Malaysia Truly Asia campaign has proven to have tremendous pulling power.

"If we continue to perform well, we will become role models for this region. It is,

therefore, important for us to continue doing well and doing everything to promote tourism," says Wee.

A few months ago, Tourism Malaysia launched another television campaign, called "The time is now, The place is Malaysia". The ads are now running on CNN and this campaign is publicising Malaysia to the entire world.

"Through this campaign, we are telling the world that now is the best time to visit Malaysia. There's so much to see and do here. We are inviting the rest of the world to come and enjoy the country's offerings," says Wee.